



Fwd: Fw: Critical thinking

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From: <anomaly@d2l.arizona.edu>

Date: Thu, Apr 5, 2018 at 5:01 PM

Subject: Critical thinking

To:

On Tuesday night a few people organized a political rally of sorts against the department I work for, and some of them specifically slandered me. Some of you were there, and I'd like to say a few things:

1. Our class, and our university, is supposed to be a forum for ideas. The essence of learning and growing as a person is to explore alternative ideas, confront your own biases, give people you disagree with the benefit of the doubt, and then learn from each other. Sometimes you're right, sometimes you're wrong, and the beauty of free and open discussion is that we all benefit.
2. As I've said in class, when criticizing anyone's views you should always treat them with charity -- that is, you should engage in a good faith attempt to understand their ideas, and respond to the best version of their argument. This is exactly the opposite of what went down on Tuesday, where I sat in the audience as a group of people with a political agenda slandered, lied about, and misrepresented not only my colleagues but also me personally. This is bad behavior, as it unethically makes false claims about people to score political points rather than engaging them in a genuine effort to get the answer right.
3. The fact that one of the speakers maliciously misrepresented my work and even called me an anti-Semite, when I'm proudly Jewish, and have written a heavily publicized [article](#) criticizing the anti-Semitism of the alt-Right, is shameful and disgusting. It's the worst form of identity politics, which engages in guilt by association and bad faith argumentation, rather than careful reasoning. Over the last few weeks I've been threatened online by neo-Nazis, and now I'm being harassed by extreme leftists because I'm in a department that includes someone (not me) who the organizer of this protest doesn't like. Turns out the alt-right and regressive left have something in common: a conspiratorial worldview paired with a belief that politics generally, and university life specifically, is a holy war rather than a cooperative enterprise.

I will be leaving the University of Arizona at the end of the semester for good. The best lesson I can impart from this bizarre episode is captured by an article you are assigned for next week called "Why People are Irrational About Politics." Read this article carefully, [reflect on your own biases](#), and focus on developing intellectual virtues like openness to evidence, and charity in interpretation, before attacking people.

Have a wonderful weekend,

Anomaly